TAB B EXCISE

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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM: AMCONGEN, Lagos, Nigeria. 109 DESP. NO.

TO: THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON. DATE: February 14, 1954

REF: ConGen's Despatches No. 94, of Jan. 17 and No. 108 of February 13, 1954.

For Dept. Use Only	ACTION	DEPT.
	NEA-4	INFO: Def-2 OIR-6 EUR-5 E-4 London - Salisbury - Capetown - Leopoldville - Monrovia - Embassy - Paris
	REC'D 2-27	OTHER: CIA-7 Army-3 Navy-3 Air-3

SUBJECT: Major Nigerian Political Developments - January 15 to February 12, 1954.

The following is a brief review of important political developments in Nigeria during the past four weeks.

Reconvened Conference on the Nigerian Constitution.

The reconvened conference on the Nigerian Constitution was, of course, the major political event of the four weeks under review. It has, however, been reported on as fully as the staff situation at this post permits, in the Consulate General's despatch No. 1[illegible] of February 13, and the several telegrams and despatches referred to therein, and comment in this despatch would merely be a duplication of that already set forth in the earlier communications to the Department.

Appointments to Central Council of Ministers, and Re-Assignment of Portfolios.

As an outcome of Azikiwe's and the NCNC sweep of the elections in the Eastern Region, reported in the Consulate General's despatch No. 94, of January 17, three new NCNC members have been appointed to the Central Council of Ministers from the Eastern Region. These are K. O. Mbadiwe, who has been assigned the portfolio of Land and Natural Resources; R. A. Njoku, assigned the Commerce and Industries portfolio, and M. T. Mbu, assigned the Labor portfolio. Mohammadu Ribadu, a Minister from the North, has been shifted from the Land and Natural Resources Portfolio to that of Mines and Power. The Ministers who have been replaced on the Council are O. Arikpo, formerly Minister of Mines and Power, A. C. Nwapa, formerly Minister of Commerce and Industries, and E. M. L. Endeley, formerly Minister of Labor.

There are currently two vacancies in the Council of Ministers - that of a fourth Minister from the Eastern Region, who under the present Constitution must be representative of the Cameroons, and that of a fourth Minister from the Western Region to fill the vacancy created b[illegible]

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created by the death of Chief Bode Thomas (Consulate General's despatch No.79, of November 25, 1953).

Comment:

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The thirteen Cameroons-elected representatives (KNC) having thus far boycotted the present Eastern House of Assembly, a considerable legal snarl exists with respect to the appointment of a fourth Minister from the East, who should be representative of the Cameroons. If the Cameroons members were to take a more reasonable attitude, it is thought that Azikiwe would "play ball" and nominate a man of their choice to fill the vacancy. If not, the post will presumably remain vacant until after the revised Constitution comes into force.

Awolowo has yet to name a replacement for Bode Thomas, and the gossip is that he is reluctant to name any of his better qualified henchmen for fear of building up a rival for his position in Western politics. Mr. S. O. Awokoya, Regional Minister of Education, is probably the strongest man next to Awolowo, and would be a logical choice unless the above factor prevails.

Eastern Regional Ministers.

The Eastern Regional Ministers, whose selection for the Regional Executive Council was reported in despatch No. 94, of January 17, have been assigned portfolios as follows:

Nnamdi Azikiwe, Minister of Local Government;
Mbonu Ojike, Minister of Works;
Michael I. Okpara, Minister of Health;
Michael C. Agwu, Minister of Land and Survey;
Ibanga U. Akpabio, Minister of Education;
Walter N. Onubogu, Minister of Natural Resources;
Ikpe Imeh, Minister without Portfolio;
Ezekiel Okoya, Minister without Portfolio.

Comment:

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Comment:

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A high source in the Nigerian government tells me that Azikiwe, at the time he submitted the nominations for the Central Council of Ministers and also in discussing his choices of Regional Ministers, indicated that these appointments were the best he could make, in view of his political obligations arising from the recent elections in the East. He indicated that after a reasonable interval he expected to replace some of the poorer appointments.

It may be added that the press reports that Azikiwe and his deputy Leader of Government Business, Ojike, have resigned as Company Directors of several of Azikiwe's enterprises - the Associated Newspapers of Nigeria, the African Continental Bank and the African Development Corporation.

Disturbance over Capitation Tax in Western Region Headed Off

On February 4, a sizeable contingent of Police was sent to Otto to head off an incipient disturbance arising from efforts to collect the capitation tax. This is at least the third time in recent months that trouble has arisen in out-lying towns over the capitation tax levies in the Western Region, and a District Officer was severely wounded in a disturbance over this subject some months ago.

Comment:

The Western Region Action Group-dominated legislature raised the capitation tax on adult males from 6d to 10s 6d in 1952-53, in order to meet expenses of its accelerated program of social services. This sharp increase was voted against the back-stage advice of expatriate officers who felt that an increase of this magnitude at one step was more than the public would stand for. Experience with the tax has been a long story of refusals to pay, and as stated above, of several disturbances of varying gravity in out-lying towns. Despite the laudable objectives of the tax, a long period of education will be necessary to bring about its general acceptance by the villager in the "bush," less than one-third

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of the estimated tax having been paid, for example, at Otto. Experience with the tax is further evidence that the District Officer and the Assistant District Officer at "bush" stations often have a better knowledge of the people and their sentiment than their elected representatives in the Regional Legislatures.

Budget Session of Northern House of Assembly.

The regular budget session of the Northern House of Assembly convened on February 8. The major proposal submitted by the Government is for a five-year (1955-1960) development plan. for the region, to cost around £79,000,000. It is anticipated that the fund would be raised from the Regional fund, local sources, the Colonial Welfare and Development Fund, and from external sources. The House will also consider the usual operating budget for services in the Region (£6,600,000), which will, of course, require revision when the constitutional changes come into effect later this year.

Report on Nigerianization of the Civil Service

The long-awaited Phillipson-Adebo report on the Nigerianization of the Civil Service was made public on February 9, and will be the subject of a separate despatch. The report is in many respects passe, as it was drafted on the assumption that the Civil Service ought to remain unitary, whereas the Constitutional Conference decided that it will consist of three Regional Civil Services, aside from the Federal Civil Service.

Budget Session of Western House of Assembly

The regular budget session of the Western House of Assembly convened at Ibadan on February 12. The proposed budget calls for approximately £7,175,000 for services in the Region, an increase of about £1,000,000 over last year. Thirty-eight percent of the 1953-54 budget was devoted to education and health services and it is anticipated that these items will be increased in the new budget.

Eastern House of Assembly Budget Session

The Eastern House of Assembly Budget Session is scheduled to convene February 16. Azikiwe, now faced with the responsibility of raising revenue in this Region, has wisely been wooing the native chiefs with proposals for setting up a Consultative and Advisory Council of Chiefs. He has also announced that his Government must win the confidence of the people and consult them before imposing high taxes on them.

Budget Session

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Budget Session of Central House of Representatives

The annual budget session of the Central House of Representatives is scheduled to convene on March 6. The budget has, of course, been drawn up on the basis of the present Constitution, and will require radical adjustment and revision after the Constitutional changes come into effect.

Erwin P. Keeler
American Consul General

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